

## Health Advisory:

### Outbreak of *Salmonella* Saintpaul Infections Associated With Consumption of Raw Tomatoes

June 12, 2008

This document will be updated as new information becomes available. The current version can always be viewed at <http://www.dhss.mo.gov>

The Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) is now using 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons:

**Health Alerts** convey information of the highest level of importance which warrants immediate action or attention from Missouri health providers, emergency responders, public health agencies, and/or the public.

**Health Advisories** provide important information for a specific incident or situation, including that impacting neighboring states; may not require immediate action.

**Health Guidances** contain comprehensive information pertaining to a particular disease or condition, and include recommendations, guidelines, etc. endorsed by DHSS.

**Health Updates** provide new or updated information on an incident or situation; can also provide information to update a previously sent Health Alert, Health Advisory, or Health Guidance; unlikely to require immediate action.

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Health Advisory  
June 12, 2008

**FROM: JANE DRUMMOND  
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**SUBJECT: Outbreak of *Salmonella* Saintpaul Infections Associated With  
Consumption of Raw Tomatoes**

Public health officials are currently investigating an ongoing multi-state outbreak of human *Salmonella* serotype Saintpaul infections. Epidemiologic investigations conducted in New Mexico and Texas have identified consumption of raw tomatoes as the likely source of the illnesses in those states. The specific type and source of tomatoes is under investigation; however, the data suggest that large tomatoes, including Roma and round red, are the source, and that the implicated tomatoes are distributed throughout much of the country.

Ten cases of *S. Saintpaul* have been reported in Missouri residents since May 25, 2008. Two of these cases are known to have a history of tomato consumption; investigation of the other 8 cases is pending.

Most persons infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 – 72 hours after infection. Infection is usually diagnosed by culture of a stool sample. The illness usually lasts 4 – 7 days.

Persons infected with *S. Saintpaul* through consumption of raw tomatoes could continue to present for care to Missouri medical providers. Patients with signs/symptoms compatible with salmonellosis should be asked about recent consumption of raw tomatoes. Although most persons with salmonellosis recover without treatment, severe infections can occur, and *Salmonella* may spread from the intestines to the bloodstream, and then to other body sites, and can cause death. Infants (<1 year old), elderly persons, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely to develop serious disease. Medical providers are encouraged to obtain stool cultures (and blood cultures, if indicated) from any individual in one of these at-risk groups if he or she has diarrhea and possible exposure to tomatoes. These at-risk persons should also be treated with antibiotics if salmonella infection is suspected, pending test results or until an alternative diagnosis is established.

All known or suspected cases of salmonellosis, whether or not they are thought to be associated with this outbreak, should be reported to the local public health agency, or to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) at 800/392-0272. Medical laboratories should send all *Salmonella* isolates to the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory for further characterization.

Questions should be directed to DHSS's Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at 573/751-6113, 866/628-9891, or 800/392-0272 (24/7).

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Current information on the outbreak is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at <http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/saintpaul/>.

Additional information, including consumer recommendations, is available from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) at <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/tomatoes.html>.